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DIPLOMACY--INTRODUCTION TO THE STRATEGY & TACTICS OF DIPLOMACY

by Larry Peery

Chapter 4: Germany

Germany is both a favored country with some players and a country that is avoided like the plague by others. Experienced players often prefer to play Germany, though its chances of winning a game are almost nil because of the intriguing opportunities offered by its central position. Novices often have a difficult time playing Germany since it is a country that calls for the epitome in playing skill, both tactically and strategically.

Germany must literally walk a tightrope. She must be strong enough to protect herself from her neighbors, yet not so strong as to force them into a coalition which will destroy her. European history proves how difficult this has been in reality, as well as in Diplomacy. Her position, along with that of Russia's and Austria's, is one of the most exposed on the board since she is open to attacks from France, England and Russia, as well as Austria though that rarely happens. Yet in spite of her many handicaps, Germany presents one of the most fascinating and difficult challenges in Diplomacy.

A. Acquisition of Unoccupied Supply Centers. Germany's main decision lies not in deciding what supply centers are hers, but in how to take them. Normally, Holland and Denmark are considered Germany's but sometimes things occur which prevent her from occupying them. Germany is immediately faced with the decision of sending her fleet in Kiel to either Denmark or Holland. This is a significant move (perhaps the most significant in Spring 1901) and has tremendous implications for Germany's future role vis-a-vis France and England. The second problem facing Germany is deciding whether to attempt to take Sweden from Denmark (or at least to prevent Russia from occupying it in 1901). This is usually done only if Germany is prepared to fight Russia and has secured an alliance with Turkey or England and can be sure of their support in the war. Any expedition into Russia by Germany must be based on firm non-aggression pacts on her western front. In such a case, Germany may move her fleet Kiel-Denmark (Spring 1901) and then to Sweden in the Fall. An alert Russian player who is expecting such an attack may cause Germany great problems by moving his fleet St. Petersburg s.c. to the Gulf and then in the Fall, instead of to Sweden, to the Baltic. This immediately threatens Kiel, Denmark, Sweden and Berlin and causes Germany many difficulties, especially if France or England are attacking from the west.

Still, Germany should be able to gain at least two unoccupied supply centers without much difficulty and will build either two armies (if fighting Russia or France) or perhaps a fleet and an army (if fighting England or, in some cases, Russia). Occasionally an experienced player builds fleets even if he is planning on fighting France or Russia. This can be an intelligent move since German fleets in the Baltic can present a serious threat to Russia and can be moved into the Atlantic to challenge England in the mid game. Most conservative players choose to build armies with which to defend their long exposed interior lines, however.

B. Alliances. Germany has a multitude of alliances from which to choose, as might be expected, due to her central interior position. Some are conservative and have limited gains; some are rather wild and present gambles on high odds. All present interesting possibilities.

1. With Austria, England, & Turkey Against Russia. Germany has much to gain from such an alliance, though any three-way alliance offers minimal rewards. Germany must be careful that such an alliance does not develop into a confrontation with an allied England and Turkey (or Austria). Normally, using one or two armies, Germany can pick up Moscow and Warsaw without great difficulty.

2. With France Against England. A German-French alliance against England is extremely difficult since neither country possesses, in the beginning of the game, fleets in the right places to attack England. Still, by manipulating their fleets, the two of them can conquer

England, provided that neither is attacked from the rear. Such a campaign is likely to be both long, costly in the number of units needed, and minimal in gain.

3. With Russia Against England. A German-Russian attack on England is almost as bad as a French-German attack but it has the advantage of being able to capture Norway fairly quickly and thus deprives England of one of her units. Again, there is the problem of bringing additional fleets to bear on England. Unless Russia builds a fleet in St. Petersburg n.c. and moves into the Norwegian, Germany cannot crack the English fleet's defensive position. This is also dangerous in that it puts Russia in a position to dominate the Scandinavian supply centers.

4. Germany and Allies vs. England. To successfully conquer England, Germany needs both the help of France and Russia. One, to attack Norway and the other, to put pressure on England's southern front. Germany is better off to avoid such an alliance since a Franco-Russian alliance against England can easily be extended to include Germany as the next victim. In summary, the limited gains, potentially dangerous positional consequences and long-term implications of a German-England conflict are such that Germany is better off allied with, or at least neutral toward, England.

5. With England Against France. The other side of the above coin is: "Should Germany join with England against France?" Germany definitely has more to gain from this alliance in the short run and it is a far easier campaign than one against England. Germany can usually take Paris, Belgium and perhaps Marseilles. Still, Germany must beware of extending herself too far into France since such an extension is a natural target for Italy and England.

6. With Russia Against Austria. There was no question in our discussion of Austria concerning an Austrian attack on Germany in the opening game. Such an attack could only be suicide or a personal vendetta, but we should consider the possibility, however remote, of Germany participating in an attack on Austria. Germany could, by going through Bohemia and Tyrolia, get into a position from which she could attack Austria and possibly capture Vienna, if the Italians or Russians would not interfere. It is unlikely that this would happen since Germany could not afford it in the beginning game. Such a maneuver would leave her other fronts defenseless before expanding powers.

G. Non-aggression Pacts. Like Austria, Germany must have non-aggression pacts with several of her neighbors if she cannot have out-right alliances.

1. With England. Germany's status vis-a-vis England will usually determine her status in the opening game. If England is an ally, Germany can fight an offensive game; if not, she must concentrate on defending herself. England's neutrality is particularly important if Germany is fighting France or Russia. Normally a neutrality pact provides for the neutrality of the Skaggerak and Helgoland Bight.

2. With France. If Germany is fighting Russia (or England) she needs France's neutrality or aid (in the later case). It is often possible for Germany and France to establish a non-aggression pact, particularly if France is fighting Italy and doesn't trust England, and Germany is fighting Russia. Such a pact should provide for the neutrality of Burgundy and the Ruhr.

3. With Russia. If there is a possibility of a German conflict on the western front with England and France, Germany must ensure the safety of her rear with either an alliance or non-aggression pact with Russia. Germany cannot fight a two-front war against three powers and survive. Normally, Germany can get a non-aggression pact with Russia fairly easily since Russia is preoccupied with other threats. Such a non-aggression pact has a better chance of surviving till the end game than either one with England or France. As part of its terms, a non-aggression pact should include the neutrality of the Baltic, Prussia, Silesia and Livonia.

4. With Austria. As a matter of course, Germany and Austria usually establish a non-aggression pact. Both nations must be primarily concerned with threats from other directions.

D. The Defensive Game. The Tier Concept is of particular significance when applied to Germany. Germany's first tier neighbors (France, England, Austria and Russia) include two powers who have no real second tier power behind them with which Germany can ally. Germany is, in essence, surrounded by a strong cordon of powers who must go through her to reach their end game opponents. Thus, unless she is clearly the dominant power by the end game, Germany will find in the end game that she is the corridor to all countries on the move. How to shut that corridor is Germany's prime problem.

1. Against England, France and Russia. Germany cannot survive a three-power attack. Her only hope lies in breaking it by either negotiating with a member of the bloc or by intervention from outside forces of a second tier country.

2. Against France and Russia. Germany can withstand such an attack provided Russia is under heavy pressure on other fronts and France is likewise forced to divert her forces to other fronts.

3. Against England and France. Germany cannot for long survive a joint attack by her two western neighbors. The over-whelming pressure of France's armies and England's fleets is too great for Germany to face alone.

4. Against Russia. Provided England and France are neutral, Germany should have no difficulty in withstanding a Russian attack. A line based on Denmark, the Baltic, Prussia and Silesia can effectively block Russia from advancing westward.

5. Against England. Just as she can withstand Russia's armies moving from the east, Germany can withstand England's fleets moving from the west, but not both at once. A line from Skaggerak through Denmark, the Helgoland Bight, and Holland should be sufficient to stop England

E. Offensive Game. Germany can rarely manage an offensive by herself against any of her three major neighbors but in conjunction with others she can mount a successful campaign. Generally, Germany will have to face the bulk of the enemies' forces while the other powers attack from the side or rear and capture the common enemy's supply centers.

Basically, Germany's choice lies in whether to turn to the west, against France, or to the east, against Russia. Whichever it is, Germany must make the decision and stick to it, for any hesitation may be just enough impetus to drive her neighbors together against her.

F. Waiting Game. As was implied above, Germany cannot afford a "waiting game" in most cases but must move immediately in conjunction with her allies to meet the advances of her opponents. To do otherwise is to court disaster.

G. Builds. As we mentioned in discussing France's builds, the first year's builds for Germany are of major importance. It is in these first year builds that Germany dictates how her entire game will be played. Armies indicate a land war, attempting to hold the middle of the board and expanding from there. Fleets indicate a more aggressive expansionist policy. Certainly the latter offers strong appeal, but most players prefer the security of a homeland filled with armies to protect it rather than fleets roaming the sea while Germany remains surrounded by expansionist land powers.

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The "article" above is the fourth installment of "Out of the Archives'" longest strategy and tactics reprint series to date, a seven-part series comprising Larry Peery's book, Diplomacy--Introduction to the Strategy and Tactics of Diplomacy. The book is broken down into seven chapters, one on each of the seven major powers in Diplomacy. You have just seen Chapter Four on the play of Germany.

ABOUT OUR COVER: We decided it was about time a little humor was injected into Hoosier Archives and a talented cartoonist from Oregon, Mark Verheiden, was kind enough to supply it. (You wouldn't believe how realistic that picture is either! Just ask my wife, Carol! /It's true!! C. Anyway, Mark is a publisher of the propzine, God Save The King. He is the player for England in 1971AR, a game conducted in Mitch Scheele's Die Munich Zeitungsente, an excellent new gamezine. Mark has agreed to do some more covers for Hoosier Archives, so stay tuned. It is a pleasure to have a member of comic fandom discover the postal Dippy mainstream. Many thanks, Mark, and welcome aboard.

DIPCON SAN DIEGO

Plans for DIPCON IV in San Diego are booming. It will be held from August 26-29th with Larry Peery as chief coordinator. For more information, you can contact me, or Larry at: 816 24th St San Diego, Calif. 92101 (714-233-8321). Many Diplonauts from all over the country have already signed up.

ARCHIVES LISTING

Due to its present large size, the archives listing will only appear infrequently or when substantial additions have been added to the archives. Since Hoosier Archives #27 was published no significant additions have been made.

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Watch for me
next week!